In Search of Schlieps on Borkum and in East Friesland

Renée Schliep Winklmann[1]
July 4, 1989

An island in the North Sea

In 1987, my husband and I were planning a trip to London, Amsterdam, and Munich.

I knew that *Irene Schliep Dietrich* (b. 1909), the daughter of *John Schliep* (b. 1868), had been in correspondence with Schliep relatives on the island of Borkum in the North Sea. Since we were going to be "in the neighborhood" anyway, what could be easier than to look them up? Irene had given us an address.

Map of Europe

I knew my place in the Schliep family tree on this side of the Atlantic. But how were

ALS ÖTLMNTA STÖHR
29 F2 NORDSEEBAD
BORKUM
DEICHSTR 23
GERMANY

Address on Borkum

we related to living Schlieps on Borkum? And what could they tell us about our common ancestors? This was the time to find out.

[1] 3338 16th Street
Boulder, Colorado 80304
Ph. (303) 443-5558

Renke Schliep
(1843 – 1910)
married
Dena Friesman
(1841 – 1919)

John	*Reka*	*Henry*	*Charlie*	*George*	*Lena*	*Sam*	*Kate*
(b. 1868 in Ill.)	(b. 1870 in Ill.)	(b. 1873 in Ill.)	(b. 1878 in Ill.)	(b. 1878 in Ill.)	(b. 1880 in Neb.)	(b. 1883 in Neb.)	(b. 1888 in Neb.)

. . . . . *Chester* . . . . .
(b. 1919)
married
Vivian Cosler
(b. 1925)

Roger	*Renée*
(b. 1949)	(b. 1952)
married	married
JoAnn Woolcott	*Karl Winklmann*
(b. 1948)	(b. 1950)

We descended from John

My relationship to Renke and Dena

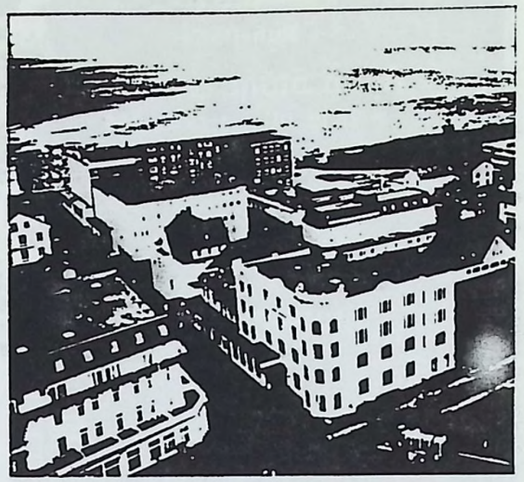
Borkum: A North Sea resort

We arrived on Borkum from Amsterdam via train and ferry late on Saturday, July 25, 1987. Surely the local phone book would provide leads.

Frau Ackermann, owner of the "Villa Ems" hotel, had one room left and graciously overlooked the fact that we had no German Marks on us, trusting our assurances that our U.S. traveler's checks could be turned into Marks at the bank on Monday.[2]

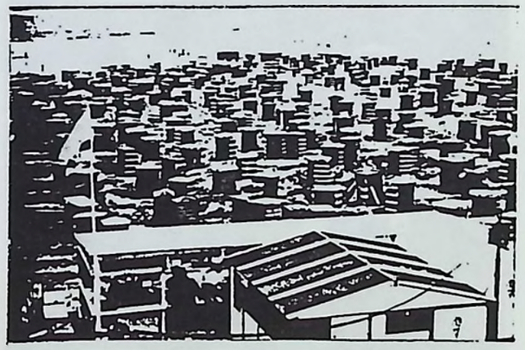
[2] She even loaned us 200 Marks. Either she trusted us, or else she knew that no ferry would be leaving the island anytime soon.

Borkum is beautiful. And all of Germany seemed to be vacationing there.



Borkum from the old lighthouse

The island is small, only 14 square miles. Many of the 8500 islanders do not own cars. They ride bicycles, rain or shine. So did we. It drizzled.[3]



Beach cabanas

[3] East Frisians are the butt of German jokes. For example, their bright yellow rain slickers are called "East Frisian minks". (Somehow, the East Frisians themselves like that expression.)

Here is another one. This tiny East Frisian town cannot afford a police car. No problem. They use a regular car. When they need to go somewhere fast one of the policemen yells at the top of his voice "Siren! Siren!". The other one yells "Flashing lights! Flashing lights!".

The phone book

We learned quickly that Borkum is not exactly overrun with Schlieps – *there were none in the phone book!* But Irene was corresponding with a "Stöhr". So we started the hunt for any and all Stöhrs. One was listed, *Gerhard* at von Frese Strasse 19.

Buying postcards . . .

Herr Ackermann, proprietor of "Foto-geschäft Ackermann", sells film, postcards, history books, etc. He is also an avid history buff and genealogist. While he knew of no Schlieps on Borkum, he gave us the full scoop on the Stöhrs. *Gerhard Stöhr* was in ill health. *Almuth Stöhr* was the full name of the lady with whom Irene had corresponded, but she had passed away several years ago. She had been a nurse. However, a sister, *Petra Stöhr Seemann*, and a nephew, *Hans–Gerhard Seemann* (Petra's son), were still to be found on the island.

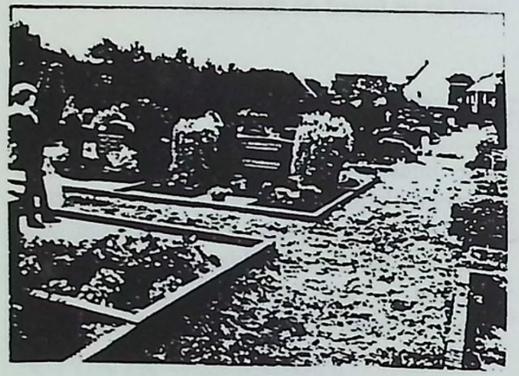
Almuth's house

The house where Almuth had lived still shows a plaque "Haus Almuth". The house was left to her nephew, Hans–Gerhard, who rents out the front building and lives in an addition in the back with his son *Erik*. Hans–Gerhard works as a loan officer in the local bank.

Almuth's house

Cemeteries

In our wanderings around the island, we went into the cemetery of the Reformed Evangelical Church.



Reformed Evangelical cemetery

Little did we expect that cemeteries would prove much more fruitful for our search than phone books. We located the grave of Almuth's mother and father. The names were *Anna Schliep* and *Peter Stöhr*. At last, a Schliep on Borkum!

Peter Stöhr and Anna Schliep gravestone

One of the locals in the cemetery told us that, yes, there were other Stöhrs in the cemetery, about right over there where that elderly lady in the gray cap and coat was standing at the far end.

We slowly made our way through the cemetery looking for more Schlieps and Stöhrs, finally reaching the place where the lady in gray was tending shrubs and flowers

Petra and I at Almuth's grave

on someone's grave. The gravestone showed the names *Erich Seemann* and *Almuth Stöhr*.

We looked at the names, we looked at the lady, she looked at us – two strangers who seemed to be interested in the very grave that she was tending. We explained our interest. She turned out to be Almuth's sister, *Petra Stöhr Seemann*, 77 years old. We had met a living Schliep relative on Borkum!

Petra and I at her house

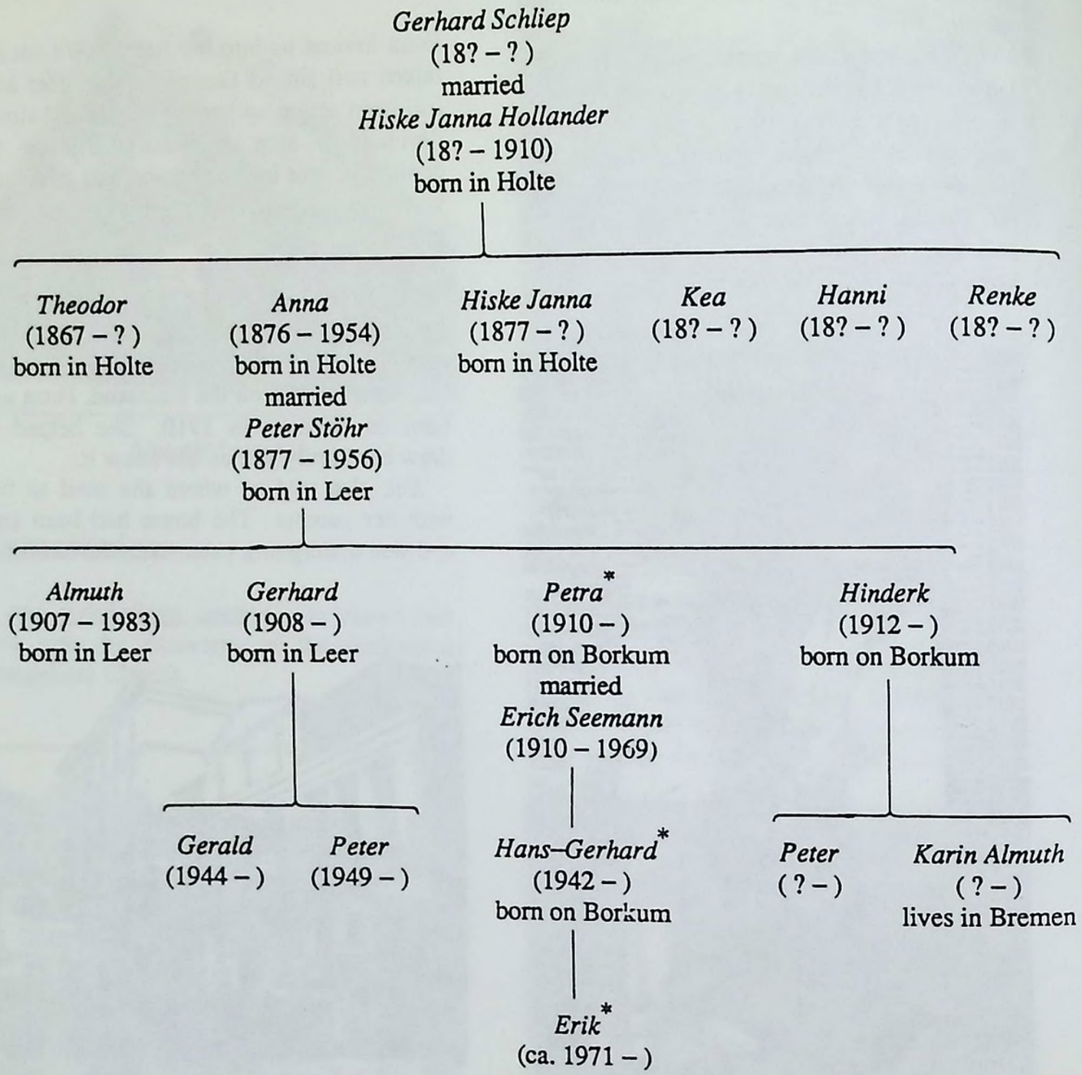
Petra's house

Petra invited us into her home. We sat and talked and sipped German wine. Her knee had been acting up lately and she had almost decided to skip her daily trip to the cemetery. But in the end she had gone anyway. She could hardly get over the coincidence.

She knew a lot. Her parents, *Peter Stöhr* (1877-1956) and *Anna Schliep* (1876-1954) were both born on the mainland. They married in 1904. Petra's older brother *Gerhard* was born in 1908 on the mainland, Petra was born on Borkum in 1910. She helped us draw her family tree as she knew it.

She also told us where she used to live with her parents. The house had been sold and was undergoing extensive renovations.

Petra's parents former house on Borkum



Petra´s family tree

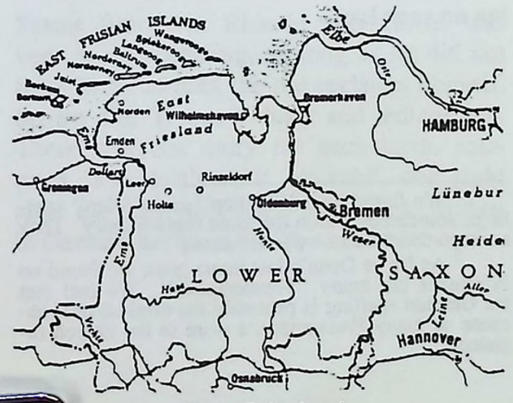
* An asterisk marks the names of people we talked to.

Back to the mainland

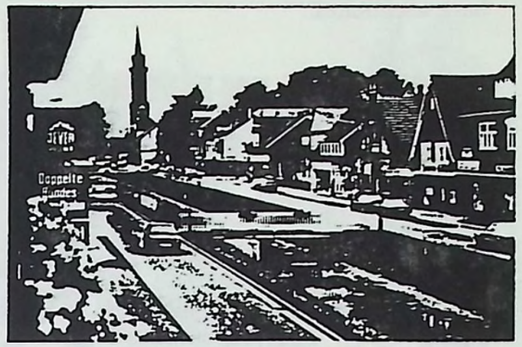
We were in the wrong place. It seems that only one Schliep ever lived on Borkum, and she was born, raised, and married on the mainland. Anna Schliep, Petra's mother, was born in 1876 in the village of Holte – on the mainland.

Wildlife on Borkum

It was time to return our trusty bikes. By ferry, train, and bus we traveled to the town of Rhauderfehn near the village of Holte.



East Friesland



Main street, Rhauderfehn near Holte

Schlieps, Schlieps, and more Schlieps

Phone books on the mainland showed the following:

In Ost–Rhauderfehn
Gerhard Schliep
Heinrich Schliep
Jelsine Schliep

In Rhauderfehn
Jan Schliep
Martin Schliep

In Leer
Gesine Schliep

In Emden
Gerhard Schliep

In Bremen
seven Schlieps

In Hamburg
six Schlieps

In Hannover
five Schlieps

Also, a fair number of German homes do not have telephones.

In Rhauderfehn, Jan Schliep's wife, sister, niece, and I.

The courthouse records confirmed what Petra had told us. Her parents Peter and Anna married in 1904. When we asked to look at older books, we found out that they only went back to 1870. We would have to try our luck with churches again.

Churches and cemeteries, again

One of several Schliep graves in the area

While there is only one courthouse in the area, there are lots of churches in the surrounding villages and each has its own set of records and its own cemetery.

We started with the church in West Rhauderfehn. We found the birthdates of many Schliepss, including,

Johann Bernhard Sliep,[4] b. 1850
Antje Schliep, b. 1853
Gesine Sophie
Wilhelmine Schliep, b. 1856
Hermann Schliep, b. 1859

There was no shortage of Freesemanns either[5]:

Henriette Freesemann, b. 1844
Johann L. Freesemann, b. 1848 } twins
Margarethe Gesina
Freesemann, b. 1848 } twins
Johann Freesemann, b. 1849
Anna Freesemann, b. 1870
Eiko Gerhard Freesemann, b. 1873
Ludger Freesemann, b. 1873
Eiko Johann Freesemann, b. 1875
Ankea Freesemann, b. 1875
Wilhelm R. Freesemann, b. 1877

We could not fit the above names into either our or Petra's family tree. The names we were really after were Renke's and Dena's – but no such luck.

[4] We found both "Schliep" and "Sliep" spellings, sometimes within the same register entry. They are recorded here as we found them.

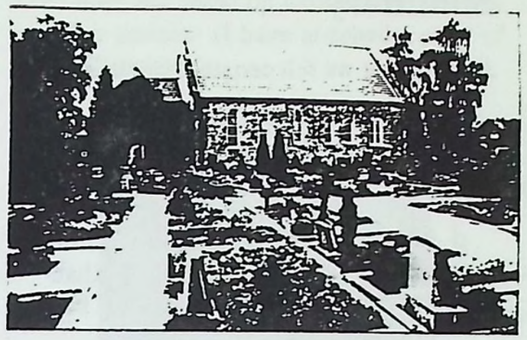
[5] As far as Dena's last name goes, we found no Friesmans but many "Freesemanns". We feel that the German spelling is probably the original one, because so many Freesemann's were in the church registers.

One of several Schliep graves in the area

As for looking for old headstones in the cemeteries, we were again out of luck. We were told by several people that after 30 years the graves can be reused.

The church near Holte

Pastor Brand, in Rhaude near Holte, was very accommodating, as long as he did not have to try to read the old registers himself. So we did. It was a dusty and tedious job. There was one entry for each birth, marriage, and death as it occurred, one right after the other through the decades, written in German Script and with no index.



Church near Holte

We felt like real genealogists. And we did find the births of an uncle and an aunt of Petra's,

Theodor Schliep, b. 1867
and *Hiske Janna Schliep*, b. 1877.

We also found

Hilke Lena Freesemann, b. 1852
Hilke Schliep, b. 1866
Bertha Maria Sliep, b. 1875
Arnoldine Foolkeline
Ahlwine Freesemann, b. 1884

But no Renke and no Dena.

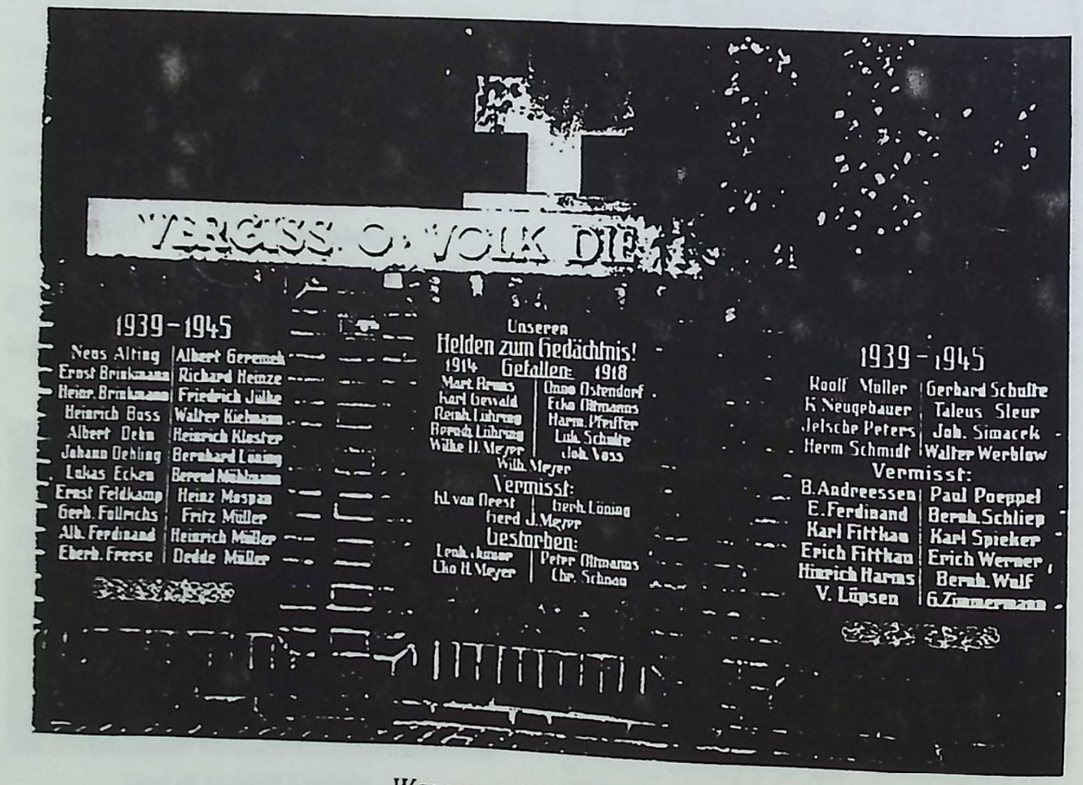
Summary

At this point we felt certain about this much:

- Borkum is beautiful.
- Borkum is not where the Schliep's came from.
- Renke and Dena Schliep came from an area around the town of Rhauderfehn on the mainland of East Friesland.
- The records of Renke's and Dena's births and possibly their marriage are probably hidden in some dusty church book in a small village near Rhauderfehn in East Friesland.

We still did not and do not know exactly how Petra Stöhr Seemann's tree connects with ours.

It was time to declare partial success and move on. We celebrated with two East Frisian specialties: smoked eel and "Kornschnaps". After an overnight train ride, we woke up in the south of Germany, in Munich, my husband's home town. He decided not to research his ancestors, not this time around anyway . . .



War memorial near Holte

Postscript

Renke's father?

Back in Colorado, I wrote to the pastors of churches in towns in the area: in Rhaude, West-Rhauderfehn, Ost-Rhauderfehn, Potshausen, Collingshorst, Langholt, Backemoor, Breinermoor, Bokelesch, Strücklingen, and Ramsloh. I asked for information on Renke Schliep and Dena Friesman. I received three replies. Two reported that they could not find anything. The pastor in Potshausen stated that a *Johann Renken Schliep*, a farm laborer in Velde, married a *Frauke Ley* in 1842. They both came from Rinzeldorf, a town not far from Rhauderfehn. The name, date, and location suggest that Johann Renken Schliep may have been Renke's father. Of course we cannot be sure.

On this side of the Atlantic

Renke and Dena crossed the Atlantic probably in 1868. The 1880 U.S. federal census for Clay County, Nebraska, shows that they came from "Hannover, Germany". Today, Hannover is a town of over half a million people. Formerly, Hannover was also the name of the surrounding province, which included East Friesland and the East Frisian Islands.

Renke and Dena's first child, *John*, was born in May 1868 in Illinois, followed by *Reka* in 1870, *Henry* in 1873, *Charlie* in 1878, and *George* in 1878. Their next child, *Lena*, was born in 1880 in Glenville, Nebraska, followed by *Sam* in 1883 and *Kate* in 1888. All of this is confirmed by the U.S. censuses of 1880 and 1900, except that Lena does not show up with Renke's family in either census. (I have attached a copy of the 1880 census.)

Dena Schliep and grandchild Dayton

Clay County, Nebraska, 1879

In 1879 Renke and Dena farmed and raised animals on 55 acres of "improved" land and 105 acres of "unimproved" land. They rented the land for shares of the products. The value of the farm, including land, buildings, farm machinery and implements, and livestock was placed at $1,705. They owned two horses, two mules, three cows and two calves. The two milk cows produced 156 pounds of butter. They also had six pigs. The number of poultry was 39, from which they got 150 eggs.[6] They grew corn (900 bushels on 18 acres) and wheat (400 bushels

[6] It seems safe to conclude that not all the poultry were layers.

on 37 acres) and produced 50 bushels of potatoes from three quarters of an acre. It seems they hired no farm laborers that year to help with the farm. The estimated value of all their farm products (including products sold, consumed, and on hand) was $450. These statistics and those for nine other Clay County farmers are included in the attached copy of an 1880 agricultural census.

Clay County, Nebraska, 1989

Thank you, Marcene, for organizing this family reunion, and the best to all of you Schlieps!

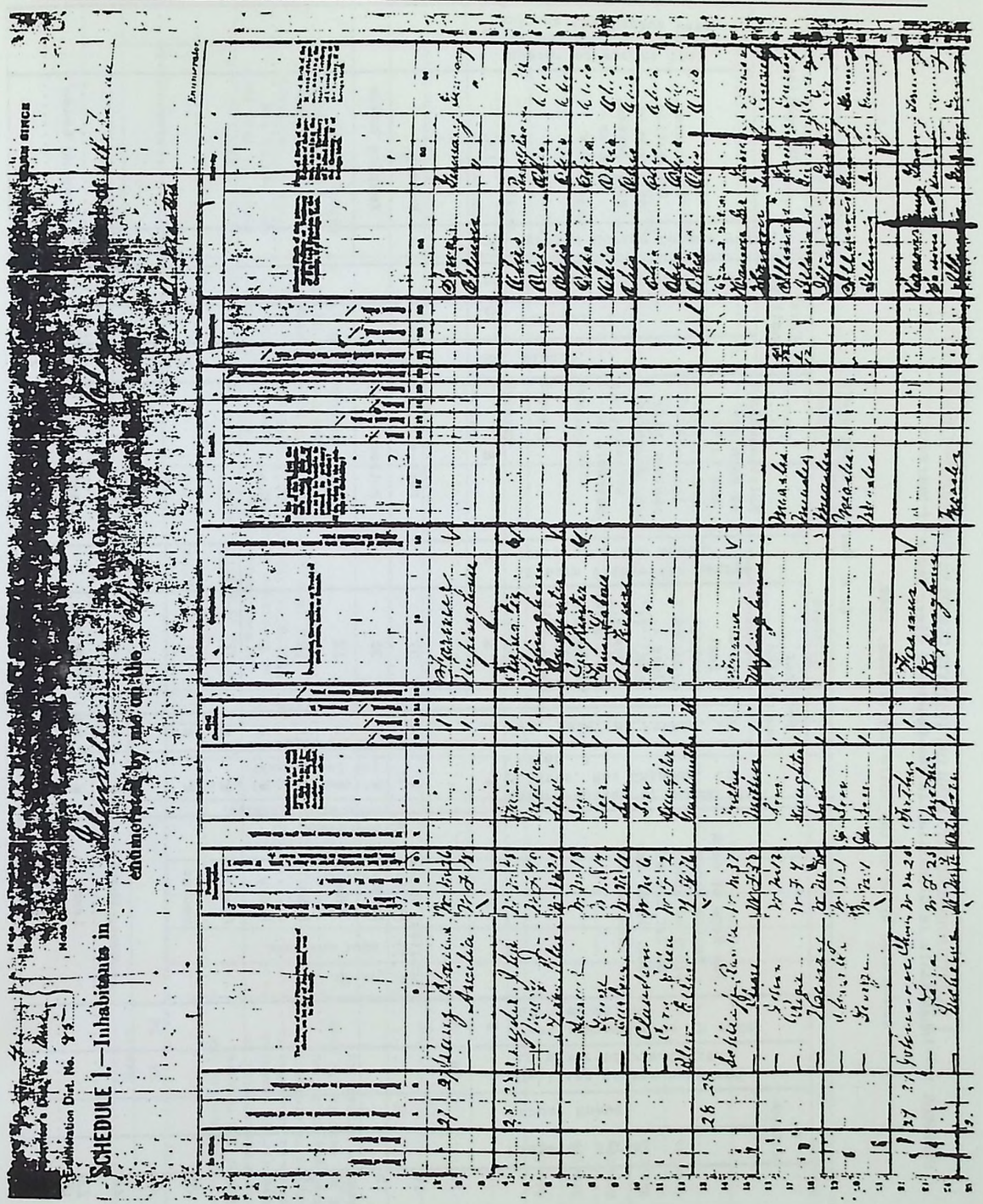
Acknowledgements

It has been fun compiling this report.[7] Many people helped. I can only mention a few.

Irene provided the initial lead. *Verna Schliep* and my mother, *Vivian Cosler Schliep*, provided many dates. *Ruby Schliep Sterkel* provided the picture of Dena Schliep.

Thank you all.

[7] We tried to be careful but of course there may still be some errors and there are certainly lots of omissions.


SCHEDULE 1.—Inhabitants in

From the 1880 US census of Glenville in Clay County

SCHEDULE 1.--Inhabitants in Glenville, in the County of Clay, State of Nebraska enumerated by me on the Third day of June, 1880.

C. A. Martin, Enumerator.

	In Cities: Name of Street.	In Cities: House Number.	Dwelling houses numbered in order of visitation.	Families numbered in order of visitation.	The Name of each Person whose place of abode, on 1st day of June, 1880, was in this family.	Personal Description: Color--White, W; Black, B; Mulatto, Mu; Chinese, C; Indian, I.	Personal Description: Sex--Male, M; Female, F.	Personal Description: Age at last birthday prior to June 1, 1880. If under 1 year, give months in fractions thus: 5/12	If born within the Census year, give the month.	Relationship of each person to the head of this family -- whether wife son, daughter, servant, boarder, or other.	Civil Condition: Single, /.	Civil Condition: Married, /.	Civil Condition: Widowed, /. Divorced, D.	Married during Census year. /.	Occupation: Profession, Occupation or Trade of each person, male or female.	Occupation: Number of months this person has been unemployed during the Census year.
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
13			28	28		\										
14					Schliep, Renke	W	M	37		Father		/			Farmer	
15					--- Dena	W	F	38		Mother		/			Keeping house	
16					--- John	W	M	12		Son	/					
17					--- Reka	W	F	9		Daughter						
18					--- Henry	W	M	8		Son	/					
19					--- Charlie	W	M	1	Jun?	Son	/					
20					--- George	W	M	1	Jun?	Son	/					
21			29	29												
22					Johnson, Charly	W	M	25		Father		/			Farmer	
23					--- Lena	W	F	25		Mother		/			Keeping house	
24					--- Nicholas	W	M	9/12	Oct	Son	/					

continued on next page

	Health: Is the person (on the day of the Enumerator's visit) sick or temporarily disabled, so as to be unable to attend to ordinary business or duties? If so, what is the sickness or disability?	Health: Blind, /.	Health: Deaf and Dumb, /.	Health: Idiotic, /.	Health: Insane, /.	Health: Maimed, Crippled, Bedridden, or otherwise disabled, /.	Education: Attended school within the Census year, /.	Education: Cannot read, /.	Education: Cannot write, /.	Nativity: Place of Birth of this person, naming State or Territory of United States, or the Country, if of foreign birth.	Nativity: Place of Birth of the Father of this person, naming the State or Territory of United States, or the Country, if of foreign birth.	Nativity: Place of Birth of the Mother of this person, naming the State or Territory of United States, or the Country, if of foreign birth.
	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
13												
14										Hanover, Ger.	Germany	Germany
15										Hanover	Germany	Germany
16	Measles									Illinois	Germany	Germany
17	Measles									Illinois	Germany	Germany
18	Measles									Illinois	Germany	Germany
19	Measles									Illinois	Germany	Germany
20	Measles									Illinois	Germany	Germany
21												
22										Hanover, Germany	Germany	Germany
23										Hanover, Ger.	Germany	Germany
24	Measles									Illinois	Germany	Germany

SCHEDULE 2.--Productions of Agricultrue in Glenville, in the County of Clay, State of Nebraska

enumerated by me on the Third day of June, 1880. C. A. Martin, Enumerator.

	OF THE PERSON WHO CONDUCTS THIS FARM.				ACRES OF LAND				FARM VALUES			LABOR	
	THE NAME	Tenure			Improved		Unimproved						
		Owner.	Rents for fixed money rental.	Rents for shares of products.	Tilled, including fallow and grass in rotation, (whether pasture or meadow.)	Permanent meadows, permanent pastures, orchards, vineyards.	Woodland and forest.	Other unimproved, including "old fields" not growing wood.	Of farm, including land, fences, and buildings.	Of farming implements and machinery.	Of Live Stock	Amount paid for wages for farm labor starting 1879, including value of board.	Weeks hired labor in 1879 upon farm (and dairy) excluding house-work.
					No.	No.	No.	No.	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	14	15
1	Walderman, Jossiah	/			46			34	850			50	
2	Bisely, Anthony (?)	/			80			80	1600	100	250	60	
3	Hecustors, Edmond F. (?)	/			130	1	5	30	2000	75	162	50	3
4	Fisher, Daniel F.	/			95		3	45	2000	129	658	18	
5	Schliep			/	55			105	1280	50	375		
6	Niuck, John (?)			/	80			80	1200	100	225		
7	Sanderson, John	/			80			80	2500				
8	Weinburg, Henry	/			140			80	3500	600	1205	125	25
9	Brandt, Louey	/			240			420	8000	1000	643	200	
10	Blecker, William			/	78					25	73		

From the 1880 census of agricultural production in Glenville in Clay County

continued on next page

	Estimated value of all farm productions (sold, consumed, or on hand) in 1879.	Horses of all ages on hand June 1, 1880.	Mules and Asses, all ages on hand June 1, 1880.	MEAT CATTLE AND THEIR PRODUCTS								Butter made on the farm in 1879.	SWINE
				ON HAND JUNE 1, 1880.			MOVEMENT, 1879.						
								Cattle of all ages.					
				Working oxen.	Milch cows.	Other.	Calves dropped.	Purchased.	Sold living.	Slaughtered.	Died, strayed, and stolen, and not recovered.		On hand June 1, 1879.
	Dollars	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	Lbs.	No.
	16	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	33	45
1	280												
2	480	2			1		1					160	
3	378	2			1		1		1			250	13
4	466	4			3	2	2					250	11
5	450	2	2		2	1	2	2				156	6
6	450	2			1							100	6
7	500			2	1		1		1			125	15
8	947	7			4	3	2					408	36
9	1200	8		2	4	2	2	1				258	23
10	300	3			1		1				1	200	2

Transcription of data from the 1880 US census of agricultural production in Glenville in Clay County

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	POULTRY ON HAND JUNE 1ST, 1880, EXCLUSIVE OF SPRING HATCHING.		Eggs produced in 1879.	CEREALS										Potatoes. (Irish.) 1879.		ORCHARDS - 1789.	
	Barnyard.	Other.		Barley 1879.		Indian Corn 1879.		Oats 1879.		Rye 1879.		Wheat 1879.				Apple.	Peach.
				Area.	Crop.	Area.	Crop.	Area.	Crop.	Area.	Crop.	Area.	Crop.	Area.	Crop.	Acres	Bearing trees
	No.	No.	Doz.	Acres	Bush.	Acres	Bush.	Acres	Bush.	Acres	Bush.	Acres	Bush.	Acres	Bush.	No.	No.
	46	47	48	49	50	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	78	79	84	88
1						5	150										
2	30		100			20	600					35	410		35		
3	30		180			16	300	4	60	3	28	34	400	3/4	40	1	
4	39	3	112			16	700	3	50	6	25	47	400	1/8	15		3
5	35	4	150			18	900					37	400	9/12	50		
6	10		40			15	540					47	400		25		
7	13		85			18	360					38	300		14		
8	35		200			60	1000	10	260			150	900		50		
9	70		400	20	350	30	1050			2	25	100	1200	1	50		
10	11		60														

Columns with the following headings had no entries, and are not included in the above transcription: Cost of fences, Cost of fertilizers, Grass Lands, Milk sold, Cheese made, Sheep, Buckwheat, Pulse, Fiber (Flax and Hemp), Sugar, Maple, Broom corn, Hops, Sweet potatoes, Tobacco, Nurseries, Vineyards, Market gardens, Bees, and Forest products.